Swat jirga flays govt 'inaction' against terrorists

By Our Correspondent

SWAT: The Swat Qaumi Jirga on Tuesday voiced deep alarm over escalating terrorism incidents and deteriorating law and order situation across the Malakand division, piling criticism over what it said the perceived inaction and 'non-seriousness' of both the federal and provincial governments.

Speaking at a news conference at the Swat Press Club, jirga members, including Mukhtiar Khan Yousafzai, Khurshid Kaka Ji, and Haji Zahid Khan, announced that they would convene a major jirga at the divisional level in December unless immediate and practical measures were initiated against terrorists.

"The rising incidents of terrorism have triggered significant unrest among the public," they noted and recalled the assurances given four months ago by the commissioner Malakand and the Swat deputy commissioner to restore peace and eliminate terrorists within one month, yet the situation has only worsened.

The jirga vehemently condemned recent terrorist acts, including the assassination attempt on their own leader, Mumtaz Ali Khan. "The ground reality contradicts official claims about the police force's capability to counter the threat," they argued and said it reinforced the impression of governmental neglect.

Mr Yousafzai went on to allege that the current instability was a continuation of policies from the previous PTI government, claiming that certain groups were deliberately brought back to Swat from Afghanistan under the supervision of former ISI chief Gen retired Faiz Hameed and Barrister Saif, a government adviser in the previous government, a move the jirga had vehemently opposed through historic protests at the time.

Declaring that any further attempts to destabilise Swat and Malakand were unacceptable, the jirga demanded that the central and provincial authorities take immediate, concrete, serious, and conclusive action to ensure peace in the region.

"If their demand is not met, the December Loya Jirga will take decisive, national-level steps against terrorism and its perpetrators," they warned.

Man, son die on road in Dera

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: A man and his son were killed and six others were injured in a road accident here on Tuesday.

A motorcycle collided with a pick-up van near Band Dhappanwala in the jurisdiction of Gomal University police station. The crash left 21-year-old Nisar Iqbal and his 52-year-old father, Gul Mohammad, residents of South Waziristan, critically injured.

Two passengers travelling in the van, Hamza Dhapp, 25, of Basti Dhappanwali, and Tayyab, 18, of Shorkot, got also hurt. All four were shifted to District Headquarters Teaching Hospital, Dera Ismail Khan, for treatment.

However, Iqbal succumbed to his injuries on the way, while his father also passed away later due to severity of his injuries.

In a separate incident, a truck overturned near Sheikh Mela in the jurisdiction of Mughal Kot police station, leaving three people injured. They were shifted to Darazinda Hospital for treatment. — Correspondent

PHC extends CM's protective bail till 27th

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court on Tuesday held an important hearing on the petition filed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Suhail Afridi, seeking protective bail and details of cases registered against him.

The bench comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Waqar Ahmad was scheduled to hear the matter; however, the hearing could not proceed due to a lawyers' strike.

The court extended the chief minister's protective bail until November 27 and once again directed the relevant authorities to submit complete details of all cases registered against him.

The bench also ordered that the CM must not be arrested in any registered case until the next hearing date. The counsel for the CM stated that multiple cases had been registered against Suhail Afridi in Islamabad and other areas.

He added that the CM required the full case record so he may approach the respective courts accordingly. — APP

A SHEPHERD steers his herd of goats in Abbottabad on Tuesday. — Online

CM Afridi seeks plan to increase cultivable area for food security

Orders GIS mapping of canal network, digitisation of records

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mohammad Sohail Afridi on Tuesday directed the irrigation department to immediately prepare a comprehensive plan for increasing the cultivable command area across the province.

"Expanding the command area is essential for ensuring food security, which remains a top priority of the provincial government," Mr Afridi told a meeting of the irrigation department at the Chief Minister's Secretariat here.

He ordered the introduction of a modern asset management system as well as geographic information system (GIS) mapping of the canal network and digitisation of records, according to an official statement.

The chief minister directed authorities to digitise all departmental functions, including abiana (water rate) collections, saying digitisation will significantly enhance both transparency and performance.

He also ordered the formulation of a comprehensive flood contingency plan and said coordinates and video evidence should be prepared for the cleaning and maintenance of canals.

Mr Afridi also said vacant posts in the irrigation department should be filled; the "on-pay scale" culture should come to an end, and the required human resources should be recruited without delay.

He said that work on all small dams should be completed within the stipulated time.

"The construction of dams is vital to meet the needs of a growing population," he said, ordering speedy measures to provide tourism facilities near dams.

During the meeting, a detailed briefing was given on the responsibilities of the Irrigation Department and its subsidiary bodies, ongoing development projects, administrative matters, legal framework, irrigation infrastructure, and budgetary issues.

Participants were informed that more than 2.412 million acres of land in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is currently cultivable. Regarding small dams, it was briefed that over 321,000 acres have been made cultivable through small dams constructed in various districts of the province, while 24 more small dams are under construction which, upon completion, will bring an additional 61,000 acres of land under cultivation. Provincial Minister for Irrigation Riaz Khan and other relevant officials were also present at the meeting.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Monday invited people with disabilities, ailing citizens and individuals living in shelter homes to the Chief Minister's Secretariat, where he listened to their concerns and issued immediate orders to authorities for their resolution.

The chief minister issued special instructions regarding citizens awaiting treatment for eye and cardiac conditions and assured them of prompt assistance.

He also directed officials to address the issues faced by differently able persons on a priority basis.

The chief minister took immediate notice of the problem highlighted by a citizen from the shelter home and ordered its swift resolution.

On the occasion, Mr Afridi said that his government had been entrusted with the mandate to serve the people and public welfare remains their foremost priority.

He added that the provincial government was following the vision of PTI founder Imran Khan by pursuing welfare oriented governance model inspired by the State of Madina.

Meanwhile, the student, who stood first in the recent MDCAT, called on the chief minister, who commended him and announced full government sponsorship of his educational expenses.

Khar IDPs assured of early return to their villages

BAJAUR: The authorities on Tuesday declared that most areas of Khar tehsil had been cleared of terrorists, and internally displaced persons would soon be allowed to return to their homes.

Deputy commissioner Shahid Ali Khan stated this during a meeting with a delegation of Bajaur Aman Jirga at his office.

The delegation led by jirga head Sahibzada Haroon Rashid and also comprising ANP MPA Mohammad Nisar Khan and Khar tehsil chairman Haji Said Badshah, apprised the deputy commissioner of the difficulties faced by people displaced by the army operation in several areas of Khar tehsil.

The delegates said the residents of Janat Shah, Lara Banda, Kosar, Godo, Shahgoo and other localities were facing difficulties since they were forced to live either with relatives or in rented houses.

They said the residents were finding it increasingly tough with winter setting in, making it difficult for them to continue staying away from home. The jirga members urged the deputy commissioner to officially announce IDPs' return as their areas had already been declared clear of terrorists.

DC Khan assured the elders that the IDPs would start returning to their areas soon.

"We're in touch with the authorities, and I'm assured that most affected areas will be cleared by tomorrow (Thursday), allowing residents to return to their villages," he assured the delegation.

Mr Khan also assured the delegation of providing financial assistance to the affected families for their damaged homes.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Red Crescent Society on Tuesday gave away hygiene kits, mugs, buckets and dates to hundreds of IDP families.

The items were distributed among several hundred displaced families housed at government high school, Lowi Sam, and government higher secondary school, Bar Kholozo, said a statement. The statement added the initiative, aimed at improving hygiene practices, upholding dignity, and supporting vulnerable households with limited access to essential facilities, was implemented in line with the instructions of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governor and guidance of the chairman PRCS Merged Areas.

Through such humanitarian actions, PRCS continues its commitment to protecting health, reducing vulnerability, and strengthening the well-being of communities in need. According to the statement, a dates package, donated by King Salman Humanitarian and Relief Centre, was distributed to hundreds of displaced families in three areas of Khar and Mamund tehsils. — Correspondent

Lawyers observe strike against conviction of colleagues

Two advocates were sentenced in Charsadda for 'disrupting' court proceedings

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Lawyers observed strike in Peshawar High Court principal seat and attached districts on Tuesday against conviction of their two colleagues by an additional district and sessions judge in Charsadda for 'disrupting' court proceedings.

The lawyers mostly stayed away from proceedings of courts including PHC and subordinate courts in Peshawar and attached districts of Nowshera, Charsadda, Mardan, Swabi, Mohmand, Khyber, Kohat and Hangu etc.

The additional district and sessions judge, Syed Adnan Shah, had convicted general secretary of Charsadda Bar Association Jawad Khan and his brother Advocate Syed Sikandar Hayat Khan on Nov 14 under section 228 of Pakistan Penal Code for 'intentionally insulting and obstructing the court' during judicial proceedings and had sentenced them to simple imprisonment for one month and fiend them Rs1,000 each.

A day earlier, PHCBA in its meeting, chaired by its president Aminur Rehman Yousafzai, had condemned their conviction and stated that the two lawyers had submitted application to the said court for suspension of their sentence under section 382A of Code of Criminal Procedure, but the same was rejected by the court.

Mr Yousafzai stated that conviction of lawyers by the said judge amounted to creating rift between bar and the bench. PHCBA had consulted Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council on the matter and with its permission had given the strike call in Peshawar and attached districts.

The association said that legal fraternity would be forced to give strike call across the province if judges failed to mend their ways.

It is pertinent to mention that few days ago exchange of words had taken place between the said judicial officer and some lawyers following which the local bar association had announced three-day strike at local level. It was reported that some of lawyers had had locked the courtroom.

The judge had taken cognisance of the said act and convicted the two lawyers. The judge had observed that it was well-settled that scandalising, obstructing or intimidating a court was a criminal wrong requiring immediate penal consequences to safeguard the dignity of the institution.

"The judicial process cannot function where intimidation, scandalous behaviour or disorderly acts are tolerated," the judge observed.

He observed that administration of justice was a divine trust, therefore, obstructing and dishonouring judicial work was contrary not only to statutory law but also to the command of Allah.

The bench ruled that the conduct of the two lawyers constituted a deliberate attempt to undermine the authority and dignity of the court, obstruct judicial proceedings and insult a public servant in the discharge of lawful duty.

Experts show concern over 'irrational' use of antibiotics

Study urges govt to take preventive measures to safeguard children

By Ashfaq Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: Paediatricians have expressed serious concerns over ineffectiveness of antibiotics in typhoid fever in children, urging health department to launch vaccination campaign, improve water and sanitation services and ensure rational use of antibiotics.

The authors of a recently published study have written to health department that the findings have confirmed extensively drug-resistant (XDR) typhoid in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, severely limiting treatment options.

The study titled "Emerging trends of antimicrobial resistance in salmonella Typhi and Paratyphi A: A three-year surveillance report from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan," has been recently published in Medtigo Journal Network.

The authors of the study include Dr Kashifullah, Dr Bilal Noor, Dr Mohammad Suliman, Dr Hamid Iqbal Bangash, Rehman Gul, Dr Khadija Aziz and Dr Ziadullah Shah.

According to the letter titled "Alarming situation of drugs resistant enteric fever (salmonella Typhi) cases in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" the lead author has drawn the attention of health secretary and director-general health services to increase in drug resistant enteric fever cases in the province.

The authors of the study said that they were consistently receiving patients with fever unresponsive to routine treatment. They said after investigation, such patients were diagnosed with culture positive drug resistant salmonella Typhi.

"To ascertain the severity of the matter, we obtained data from a well-reputed Lahore-based laboratory which revealed 621 positive cases, including 562 salmonella Typhi and 59 Paratyphi," they said. Regarding the resistance patterns, they have named resistant drugs used by those patients.

The study, conducted by paediatricians working in Naseerullah Khan Babar Memorial Hospital Peshawar, said that resistant level to Ciprofloxacin was 100 per cent, Ampicillin 95pc, Cefixime 92pc, Ceftriaxone 92pc, Chloramphenicol 90pc and Trimethoprim-Sulfamethoxazole 81pc.

It said only two antibiotics including Azithromycin and Meropenem were found fully effective. According to it, Azithromycin remains the only effective oral option, but its irrational prescribing may drive resistance like other antibiotics.

"Meropenem is fully effective, but its inappropriate use risks resistance development as well," said the authors of the study. Beset by the situation with which the antibiotics are used, they have asked health department to take preventive measures to safeguard children.

The recommendations of the study said that the department should launch mass vaccination campaigns using typhoid conjugate vaccine (TCV) in addition to strengthening water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure in the province.

A public awareness drive is important on the significance of safe water and hand hygiene, clean filter water, hygiene practices, child safety, health awareness sessions and establishing linkages among hospitals to ensure proper referral system of patients.

The government should check unhygienic conditions in kitchens in hotel, street vendors, poor quality ice factories and sanitation system.

Health experts have also called upon government to put in place rational antibiotic policy, including restriction on the use of Meropenem and Azithromycin as first-line treatment by general practitioners and reserve use of Meropenem strictly for hospitalised and culture-proven severe cases.

"Implement strong antibiotic stewardship programmes in healthcare facilities with surveillance and reporting system," they said. They added that the department should conduct regular antimicrobial resistance (AMR) monitoring across the province with establishment of a central, real-time AMR database for policy guidance.

They said that hospital protocols should be developed with strict directive that typhoid cases should be treated only after blood culture confirmation where possible and avoidance empirical overuse of Carbapenems to prevent further spread of drug-resistant typhoid in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.